

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 ARA-06 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 PA-01 PRS-01
AID-05 CEQ-01 CIAE-00 ERDA-05 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-08
EPA-01 INR-07 L-03 NSF-01 NSC-05 NSAE-00 PM-04
USIA-06 OES-06 SS-15 SP-02 INT-05 CEA-01 CIEP-01
FPC-01 H-01 OMB-01 STR-04 TRSE-00 ACDA-07 FEA-01 /142 W
-----010225Z 130193 /75

R 312223Z JAN 77
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2665
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
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AMEMBASSY WARSAW
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CONFIDENTIAL WELLINGTON 0381

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: TGEN, XV, AS, NZ
SUBJECT: ANTARCTICA: SENATOR WEBSTER'S ACCOUNT OF NEW ZEALAND OIL
EXPLORATION

REF: CANBERRA 0683

SUMMARY: STATEMENT OF AUSTRALIAN MINISTER FOR SCIENCE,
SENATOR WEBSTER, (REPORTED REFTEL) ALLEGING OIL EXPLORATION
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"OFF NEW ZEALAND'S ANTARCTIC TERRITORY" IS ERRONEOUS BY A
LONG SHOT. GONZ AND UASTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION SOURCES ARE
PERPLEXED AS TO JUST WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN SAID DURING VISIT
WHICH RESULTED IN WEBSTER'S MISUNDERSTANDING. BEST GUESS IS THAT
WEBSTER SOMEHOW CONFUSED BUNKER HUNT/HILLIPS OIL EXPLORATION,
APPROXIMATELY 160 KILOMETERS OFF NEW ZEALAND'S STEWART
ISLAND, WITH ANTARCTIC DRILLING. END SUMMARY.

1. SCIENCE OFFICE HAS TALKED WITH SEVERAL SOURCES IN MFA, ANTARCTIC DIVISION OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH, OFFICE OF SCIENCE MINISTER, AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY AND PHILLIPS PETROLEUM. SINGLE ASPECT ABOUT WHICH ALL SOURCES AGREE IS THAT WEBSTER WRONG BY A LONG-SHOT, I.E. THERE IS NO OIL EXPLORATION GOING ON WITHIN EVEN REMOTE PROXIMITY OF NEW ZEALAND'S ANTARCTIC CLAIM, THE ROSS DEPENDENCY.

2. THREE SOURCES IN GONZ SCIENCE MINISTRY, WHO CLAIM TO HAVE BEEN WITH SENATOR WEBSTER THROUGHOUT HIS HOURS IN NEW ZEALAND, RECALL NO CONVERSATION IN WHICH SUBJECTS OF ANTARCTIC ACTIVITIES AND OIL EXPLORATION WERE COMBINED. THEY ARE PERPLEXED AS TO HOW WEBSTER'S MISUNDERSTANDING COULD HAVE OCCURRED.

3. MOST LIKELY EXPLANATION, OFFERED BY SEVERAL SOURCES, IS THAT WEBSTER SOMEHOW CONFUSED A DISCUSSION OF THE HUNT/PHILLIPS DRILLING OPERATION SOUTH OF STEWART ISLAND AS BEING CLOSE TO OR "OFF NEW ZEALAND'S ANTARCTIC TERRITORY." PHILLIPS CHIEF GEOLOGIST SAYS ITS SOUTHLAND DRILL SITE IS LOCATED IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS 160 KILOMETERS SOUTH OF STEWART ISLAND. AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION HAS ADVISED GOA FOREIGN MINISTRY THAT COINCIDENT OF DISTANCES AND FACT HUNT/PHILLIPS WILL HAVE \$100 MILLION INVESTMENT IN DRILLING SITE ARE PARTIAL EXPLANATIONS FOR WEBSTER'S CONFUSION.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PETROLEUM, EXPLORATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 31-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
Decapton Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decapton Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977WELLIN00381
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770034-0924
Format: TEL
From: WELLINGTON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t1977011/aaaaaaajy.tel
Line Count: 88
Litigation Code IDs:
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Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: a096b5cf-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 CANBERRA 683
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3473793
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ANTARCTICA: SENATOR WEBSTER'S ACCOUNT OF NEW ZEALAND OIL EXPLORATION
TAGS: TGEN, XV, AS, NZ, (WEBSTER)
To: STATE CANBERRA
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a096b5cf-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009